

Guardian

On the
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signed

Friday February 16 1996

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NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR 46.47

The Scott Report Special four-page analysis



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Review

'Deliberate failure' by Waldegrave □ Lyell was 'personally at fault'

Major: we're not guilty

Cook accuses ministers of ducking facts

Michael White and Richard Norton-Taylor

JOHN Major last night threw a protective shield around the two ministers at the centre of the arms-to-Iraq controversy in the face of caustic criticism of their conduct in the long-awaited Scott Report and angry Opposition calls for their dismissal.

Both the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, William Waldegrave, and Sir Nicholas Lyell, the Attorney General, insisted they would not resign and Downing Street made plain it will fight to keep them as Labour renews what Mr Major regards as its scurrilous counter-attack today.

Yesterday's Cabinet decision to tough out the pre-election crisis came despite Mr Waldegrave being accused of a "deliberate" failure to inform Parliament about a decision to allow exports of more arms-related equipment to Iraq for fear of "strong public opposition" — particularly in light of Saddam Hussein's gassing of Kurds.

Sir Richard Scott says in his report that there was a change of policy towards Iraq in 1988, and to argue otherwise, as Mr Waldegrave and his fellow ministers did, amounted to "sophistry".

He criticises Sir Nicholas for being "personally at fault" in his handling of the Matrix Churchill trial — the collapse of which triggered the 38-month inquiry.

But his targets go beyond the two ministers most closely involved. Sir Richard accuses the Government of "failing to discharge the obligations imposed by the constitutional principle of ministerial accountability".

Questions of Procedure for Ministers says it is their duty not to deceive or mislead Parliament. "Example after example has come to light of an apparent failure by ministers to discharge that obligation."

The Prime Minister and his Cabinet colleagues clung to Sir Richard's acceptance that there was no conspiracy to let innocent Matrix Churchill defendants go to jail and that both ministers acted "honestly and in good faith" as the Thatcher government changed its policies to help British industry cash in on the end of the Iran-Iraq war. There was "no duplicitous intention", the report concedes.

In a combative Commons statement, Ian Lang, the Trade Secretary, promised to act on Lord Justice Scott's calls for reforms, including greater government openness and better management of intelligence reports, while insisting that it was Labour's duty to apologise for three years of "reckless and mul-

lacious" allegations of conspiracy and cover-up.

The Whitehall publicity machine had eight days in which to hone its defence since receiving the 1,800 page report. It was given to MPs and peers 10 minutes before Mr Lang spoke yesterday.

Faced with what Tory loyalists later said was "a cock-up, not a conspiracy", Labour insisted that incompetence alone would warrant the two resignations.

Mr Waldegrave went on a media offensive, thanking Sir Richard — who had been heavily attacked by senior Tories before publication — for "clearing me of lying to Parliament or intending to mislead anyone in letters I signed".

Sir Nicholas said the judge's view that public interest immunity (PII) certificates had been wrongly used in the Matrix Churchill trial was not backed by most legal opinion. But if any ministerial blood is shed in the battle ahead, it remains likely to be his since the report blames him personally for not conveying Michael Heseltine's doubts about the PII device to the trial judge.

Led by the shadow foreign secretary, Robin Cook, Labour and the Liberal Democrats accused ministers of blatant news management designed to duck the Report's two central conclusions: that ministers did change their arms sale policy towards Saddam Hussein and that they refused to admit it either to Parliament or the courts.

In Sir Richard's words, there was "clear evidence" that ministers knew of the Iraq supergun a year before parts of it were seized by British Customs in 1988, Mr Cook said. As for the intelligence information as to the true destiny of Matrix Churchill machine tools Iraq — it was "so strong" that ministerial insistence to the contrary amounted to "the Nelsonian use of a blind eye".

Downing Street made no effort to defend Alan Clark — whose "gungho" attitude towards the guidelines is well known — or Lord Trefgarne, both junior ministers who modified the guidelines with Mr Waldegrave.

Downing Street officials are stressing both Mr Major's anger at Opposition "smeared" and his record as a champion of the kind of open government and accountability to Parliament the Scott inquiry suggests was absent in the Thatcher years.

The one minister who emerged with enhanced prestige is Mr Heseltine, who saw political problems Sir Nicholas and others failed to spot.

Scott report analysis, pages 2-5; Leader comments, page 10; Martin Woolcott, page 11

IRA bomb found in London

LONDON'S West End was brought to a standstill yesterday after an IRA device — understood to be 1lb of Semtex — was planted in a telephone booth in an area crowded with office workers and tourists, write *Duncan Campbell and David Shurruck*.

The device, in a sports bag in Charing Cross Road, was dismantled after two coded warnings. An area of about two square miles was closed

off.

In a further confirmation that the ceasefire had ended, a senior member of the IRA told the *Shin Fein* newspaper *An Phoblacht* (Republican News) that the ceasefire was over and blamed John Major for the breakdown.

The former Irish prime minister, Albert Reynolds, said yesterday he had been informed by loyalists that a second London bomb would not go unanswered.



Sir Richard Scott at the publication of his long-awaited report

PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN ARGLER

Main points of the inquiry

- Government policy towards the export of "non-lethal military goods" was changed following the Iran-Iraq ceasefire in 1988 in a way that should have been reported to the Commons.
- The ministers involved in shaping this change were William Waldegrave, Alan Clark and Lord Trefgarne.
- It was a substantive change in policy, not a reinterpretation of existing advice in the light of changing circumstances, as Mr Waldegrave claimed in his evidence to the Scott Inquiry.
- Government ministers "deliberately" failed to inform Parliament of this secret shift in policy because of fears of public opposition.
- None of the ministers involved in the changes acted with "duplicitous" intent in reshaping guidelines, but they agreed that no publicity should be given to the decision to relax them.
- The failure to reveal the relaxation of restrictions "precluded a public debate on this important issue taking place on an informed basis."
- The Government's claim that its position over arms sales to Iran and Iraq was "even-handed" had been untrue since the decision, taken as a consequence of the Salman Rushdie affair, to return to a more strict approach towards Iran.
- In the Supergun affair, MI6 and the Government had reason to suspect that pipes being produced

'Not a verdict but a challenge to our sense of morality'

Commentary

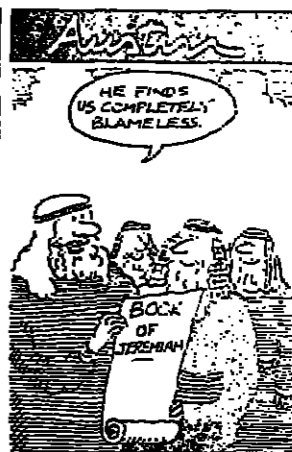
Hugo Young

SIR Richard Scott is a decent man. He says the ministers he was investigating are decent men. They made mistakes, but because they sincerely believed they were not making them, they can claim exoneration from the charges against them.

It's a very British verdict, of the kind unfamiliar to a court of law. The judge does not name the guilty men. He won't put the black mark on them. He leaves it open for the equally British pattern to be re-affirmed whereby things may have gone wrong but nobody is responsible. In the end the judge sub-contracts final judgment to politicians and the people.

Yesterday, the conspiracy of sincerity worked well for the Government. All the facts are in the report, but the conclusion to be drawn is left tantalisingly open. Ministers misled Parliament time after time, but because they didn't mean to, we're invited to bring in an acquittal. The Attorney-General got law and practice wrong in dealing with Mr Heseltine's anxieties about signing away the Matrix Churchill defendants' right to demand material evidence for their defence. But he is not stigmatised. He is apparently to survive on the strength of a double negative from Scott: "I do not accept that he is not personally at fault."

So Mr Attorney Lyell is an honourable man. So are they



all honourable men. The court where this claim will be assessed is not Lord Justice Scott's. He merely lays out the facts, and declares for the sincerity with which these people made their crass mistakes. The court of public opinion is what matters. And the question before the people is: how much sincerity is enough?

On the Public Interest Immunity Certificates, a little may suffice. This was the sting John Major most resented. He couldn't and didn't believe that Tory ministers, his colleagues round the cabinet table, had knowingly signed bits of paper designed to send innocent men to prison. It would be so completely un-British. And insofar as Labour rather unselfishly fell for the temptation to build this into a "conspiracy" to pervert the course of justice, Scott's account gives Messrs Clarke, Rifkind and others the talk-out they always knew

Turn to page 6, column 3

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2 THE SCOTT REPORT



In the frame: Ministers and officials fight to fend off a range of criticism in the report

Parliament was deliberately misled over arms sales for fear of 'strong public opposition'. To argue otherwise amounts to 'sophistry'



Walking into controversy... William Waldegrave leaving home yesterday morning, and the Attorney General, Sir Nicholas Lyell, in Downing Street



PHOTOGRAPHS MARTIN ARABLES

Punches are pulled over blame but

Richard Norton-Taylor assesses the impact of criticisms on both politicians and civil servants

MINISTERS deliberately misled Parliament about its policy towards arms sales to Iraq, and did so for fear of strong public opposition. The policy was secretly changed and to argue otherwise, as ministers — specifically William Waldegrave — did, amounts to "sophistry".

These, together with sharp criticism of the role of Sir Nicholas Lyell, the Attorney General in the Matrix Churchill arms-to-Iraq prosecution, are the key political conclusions in a catalogue of incompetence, bad official advice, and an obsession with secrecy spread across the 1,800 pages of Sir Richard Scott's report. "Government statements

made in 1989 and 1990 about policy on defence exports to Iraq consistently failed, in my opinion, to comply with the standards set... by the Questions of Procedure for Ministers — guidelines set by the Government to cover its own conduct — says Sir Richard. Ministers, he says, "failed to discharge the obligations imposed by the constitutional principle of ministerial accountability".

Sir Richard proposes a root and branch reform of Whitehall practice in a plea for more open and honest government, and a better informed Parliament and public. But he sometimes pulls his punches in identifying where precisely the blame for mistakes and deceptions lies, leaving it — as he said he would in recent interviews — to MPs and the public to decide.

His caution makes his criticisms more powerful. "The answers to parliamentary questions, in both Houses of Parliament, failed to inform Parliament of the current state of government policy on non-lethal arms sales to Iraq," he says. He adds: "This failure was deliberate and was an inevitable result of the agreement between the three junior ministers that no publicity would be given to adopt a more liberal or relaxed policy or interpretation of the [export] guidelines."

The three ministers were Mr Waldegrave, then a Foreign Office minister, and the former trade ministers, Alan Clark and Lord Trefgarne. They secretly agreed to relax export controls to Iraq at the end of 1988 after the ceasefire in the Iraq-Iran war. As a result of what Sir Richard describes as the ministers' "conscious" decision, "answers given by ministers to parliamentary questions and letters written in response to queries raised by MPs in correspondence were designedly uninformative".

He adds: "The failure of government to be forthcoming in its public statements about its export policy towards Iraq precluded a public debate on this important issue taking place on an informed basis." Sir Richard makes it clear, too, that evidence from the thousands of Whitehall documents provided to his inquiry, showed that the deliberate decision to keep the decision secret was the result as much of fear of public outcry after Saddam Hussein's gassing of Iraqi Kurds as

from any diplomatic sensitivities. Explanations given by Lord Howe, the former foreign secretary, and Mr Waldegrave that they did not warn Lady Thatcher of the secret shift in the export guidelines because the decision was not sufficiently significant, are "unconvincing", says Sir Richard. "Whatever the eventual result in terms of defence sales to Iraq... the intention of those who were involved... was that the changes... would be a good deal more than 'minor adjustments'." The decision, he says, was intended to enable British companies to take advantage of what was perceived to be a valuable export market.

Heseltine stand ignored

Lyell

David Pallister on a 'serious omission' by the Attorney General in failing fully to instruct the prosecutor on PII reservations



SIR Nicholas Lyell, the Attorney General who handled the preparations for the Matrix Churchill trial, was personally at fault for a serious omission in the prosecution case, Sir Richard said. This was the failure to instruct the prosecuting counsel, Alan Moses QC, that Michael Heseltine, then trade and industry secretary, had reservations about signing a public interest immunity certificate designed to persuade the judge not to disclose documents to the defence.

Mr Heseltine believed that some of the documents covered by the certificate were helpful to the defence and should be disclosed. The judge was never advised of Mr Heseltine's doubts, even though Sir Nicholas had assured Mr Heseltine that the limited scope of his PII would be drawn to the attention of the court. Sir Richard said he accepted "the genuineness of his belief that he was personally, as opposed to constitutionally, blameless for the inadequacy of the instructions sent to Mr Moses. But I do not accept that he was not personally at fault. The issues raised by Mr Heseltine's stand on the PII certificate did not fall into the category of mundane routine, run of the mill issues that could properly be dealt with by officials in the Treasury Solicitor's Department without the Attorney General's supervision."

Mr Heseltine's stand on the PII certificate did not fall into the category of mundane routine, run of the mill issues that could properly be dealt with by officials in the Treasury Solicitor's Department without the Attorney General's supervision. Sir Richard said Mr Heseltine's concerns raised very serious issues of constitutional and legal, and it was the responsibility of the Attorney General to see they were articulated. "Major responsibility for the inadequacy of the instructions to Mr Moses must, in my opinion, be borne by the Attorney General."

In a written statement issued with the report, Sir Nicholas insisted that the current legal practice in 1992 supported his view that ministers had a duty to sign PII certificates, though Sir Richard found exceptions to this. Sir Nicholas said the notion that ministers signed the certificates to suppress information and "were prepared to see innocent men sent to prison are completely false and without foundation".

Sir Nicholas accepted that Mr Moses's brief had been inadequate by not including correspondence between Mr Heseltine and himself, but the system operated exactly as it was intended to do. Every document was shown to the judge. The judge read the papers and himself decided which documents should be disclosed. In his criticisms of the handling of Mr Heseltine's certificate, Sir Richard said: "I would have expected him [the Attorney General] to recognise that important constitutional and legal issues were raised by Mr Heseltine's stand and to have ensured that Mr Moses, whose responsibility was to place the issues fairly before the court, was adequately instructed so that he could discharge that responsibility."

Sir Richard said that the instructions to Mr Moses were concerned, there was, in my opinion, an absence of the personal involvement by the Attorney General that Mr Heseltine's stance and its implications had made necessary. Sir Richard said Mr Heseltine was not told that he had a discretion to authorise disclosure. If he had done so, and had insisted on disclosure, that would have undermined the credibility of the certificates signed by other ministers.

Untrue letters sent to MPs

Waldegrave

Former FO minister accused of misleading House in saying guidelines were not changed. David Pallister lists the charges



WILLIAM Waldegrave, the foreign office minister criticised for sending 38 untrue letters to MPs between March and July 1989, and for misleading Parliament. In the letters he asserts that "the Government have not changed their policy on defence sales to Iraq or Iran." Sir Richard accused the minister, along with other colleagues, of giving parliamentary answers which deliberately failed to inform MPs about the new guidelines.

Mr Waldegrave rejected the report's criticisms in every paragraph. In a prepared statement he said: "Sir Richard Scott clears me of lying to Parliament or intending to mislead anyone in letters I signed. He also proves beyond doubt that I did not connive in allowing machine tools for arms manufacture to go to Iraq." After the report was released Mr Waldegrave repeatedly said that Sir Richard accepted that he had had no intention to mislead. "The vital thing," he said, "is that he doesn't doubt my good faith."

degrave, Alan Clark, and Lord Trefgarne) that no publicity would be given to the decision to adopt a more liberal, or relaxed policy... I have come to the conclusion that the overriding and determinative reason was a fear of strong public opposition to the loosening of the restrictions on the supply of defence equipment to Iraq and a consequential fear that the pressure of the opposition might be detrimental to British trading interests.

Although Sir Richard accepted that Mr Waldegrave did not regard the agreement to change the guidelines as a change of policy, he said there was "overwhelming evidence to the contrary". Mr Waldegrave also gave "inaccurate" replies in his letters when he said that government policy was covered by the "strict application of guidelines".

Unsound advice and inadequate briefings: report reserves some

'The avoidance of criticism is an unacceptable reason for keeping facts from Parliament'

Clare Dyer, Simon Beavis, Chris Harris, Edward Pilkington and Ian Black

SIR Richard examines the roles of civil servants involved in the Matrix Churchill prosecution and the conduct of ministers who signed Public Interest Immunity certificates, effectively denying the defendants a fair trial. Most criticism is reserved for officials.

The report notes that on November 6, 1992, a day after Alan Clark completed the evidence that led to the trial's collapse, Sir Brian called a meeting with Alan Moses QC, Customs' senior prosecuting counsel, to discuss dropping charges against the defendants. Mr Moses told the meeting that Customs had executed the policy of clamping down on companies suspected of exporting arms to Iraq "in its role as enforcement agents for the Government's export licence policy".

Mr Moses comes in for criticism over his application to trial judge Brian Sweeney to have information withheld from the defence under PII certificates. These "gagging orders" were signed by five government ministers. Mr Moses said in pre-trial hearings that he had read the documents which the Government wished to keep secret. He concluded they did not assist the defence "in relation to any foreseeable issue".

But Sir Richard calls Mr Moses's advice "fundamentally unsound" and "flawed". He continues: "The value of the documents to the defendants in preparing to cross-examine government officials and ministers... seems to me so obvious as to be hardly worth stating."

But the report says Mr Moses was inadequately briefed by Customs. It blames Andrew Leithead, an assistant Treasury Solicitor in charge of litigation for the Department of Trade and Industry. Mr Leithead played a key role in briefing Mr Moses to resist disclosure of the documents covered by PII certificates. Sir Richard criticises the instructions as "inadequate". They omitted to mention Michael Heseltine's reluctance to sign his certificate. Mr Heseltine had asked that his misgivings be passed on to the judge.

Mr Leithead is also criticised for advising two DTI officials to alter their witness statements. Sentences in the statement by Anthony Steadman, head of the DTI's export licensing bureau at the time, showing the department suspending the machine tools were being used for military purposes, were deleted. Mr Leithead said in evidence that he was "merely suggesting to Mr Steadman what the correct position would be."

His role centres on confusion over three 1988 export licences for machine tools. The end use for the equipment was never established. But Eric Beston, a civil servant at the DTI export licensing bureau, is attacked over his evidence at the trial. Sir Richard says his evidence "was not frank", and was designed to protect officials and ministers. Sir Richard records Mr Beston's comments on his report's conclusions. "In retrospect, I should have given more time to re-examining events and re-reading original papers. But it was never my intention to give anything other than frank evidence."

The report largely exonerates the ministers who signed the PII certificates. Malcolm Rifkind, then defence secretary, unlike colleague Peter Lilley, then a minister at the Department of Trade and Industry, at least read the information on which the certificates were used. He told the inquiry that he "did not regard himself as having a discretion to decline to claim PII for documents which fell within the 'advice to ministers' class". Mr Lilley was worried he might compromise security. Kenneth Clarke, then home secretary, gave permission for a Security Service officer to give evidence anonymously, a decision which conflicted with the Attorney Gen-

سكوت ريتشارد

Nov 1989: Ministers approve Iraq's bid for 200 tons of arms to Iraq - memo to James.

May 1990: British government has agreed to allow Iraq to export arms to Iraq via Jordan.

June 1990: Customs, acting independently, make first seizure of arms. Trade and Industry officials, who had no prior knowledge, would bring the Whitehall's attention.

July 19, 1990: Cabinet Committee approves a generally more liberal arms policy towards Iraq, on condition that Saddam Hussein is not using the arms for his own purposes.

July 27, 1990: Department of Trade and Industry approves Iraq's bid for 200 tons of arms to Iraq via Jordan.

Aug 24, 1990: Iraq makes bid for 200 tons of arms to Iraq via Jordan.

Oct 1990: Customs seize 200 tons of arms to Iraq via Jordan.

Nov 1990: Charges against two men relating to the 'supergun' affair dropped after consultation with the Attorney General, then Sir Patrick Mayhew, Customs furious.

Feb 1991: British land forces take part in Gulf war. Paul Henderson (below) and two fellow MC directors arrested and charged.

1991: Two ministers, Kenneth Baker and Peter Lilley, sign Public Interest Immunity certificates designed to prevent Government documents about the defence in the MC court proceedings. Advised to do so, how and in future memoranda by Sir Nicholas Lyell, Attorney General.

Nov 1991: The MC 3 committed to trial at the Old Bailey.

1991-92: Department of Trade and Industry attempts to bring the MC prosecution before the courts. Ministers of the day are taking the approval.

1992: PI certificates signed by Baker and Lilley in relation to the Ordtec trial.

February 1992: Ordtec 4 convicted for selling arms to Iraq via Jordan.

Jun-Sep 1992: Four ministers - Malcolm Rifkind, Kenneth Clarke, Thomas Borgeaud and Michael Heseltine - sign Public Interest Immunity certificates for documents relating to the MC trial.

Oct 1992: MC trial opens at the Old Bailey.

Nov 7, 1992: The trial comes to a sudden halt when Alan Clark, no longer a minister or MP, admits he gave the machine tool exporters a nod - and a wink - and that he was 'co-operating with the security'. After further consultations, over the weekend Crown counsel says no further evidence will be offered.

November 10, 1992: PI certificates signed by Baker and Lilley in relation to the Ordtec trial.

1994: Whistleblowing campaign begins in Whitehall to discredit the inquiry and Scott.

May 1994: Conviction against two Eurotec directors sentenced in the Iraqi 'nuclear triggers' case quashed on appeal.

July 1994: Conviction against Dunk quashed.

June 1995: Leak of draft Scott report to BBC suggests William Waldegrave is most at risk of severe criticism.

Nov 1995: Conviction against Ordtec 4 quashed on appeal.

Jan 1996: Former ministers Lord Howe and Douglas Hurd give interviews criticising the inquiry as flawed and unfair. Howe begins over who gets advance copies.

Feb 15, 1996: 1,800 page Scott report published.



misleading MPs over arms cover-up

Sir Nicholas Lyell should have told prosecution of Heseltine's reservations

Sally Weale reports on the implications drawn from a trial which Sir Richard concluded should not have happened



Michael Heseltine took a stand over certificates



Alan Moses 'given inadequate instructions'

THE Matrix Churchill trial was one which - with the benefit of hindsight - ought never to have been commenced, Sir Richard Scott concluded in his report.

In his post-mortem into the ill-fated prosecution of the three company directors, Sir Richard focuses his criticism on the role of Attorney General Sir Nicholas Lyell for his handling of the prosecutions.

Sir Nicholas is further criticised for his preparation of the Public Interest Immunity certificates, commonly known as gagging orders.

The PII prevented disclosure to the court of documents which would have shown that guidelines on exports to Iraq had changed and thus that the Matrix Churchill directors were not in breach of government guidelines.

Sir Richard said the chief prosecution counsel in the trial, Alan Moses QC, had been given inadequate instructions.

Mr Moses said, Sir Richard said, had been informed of concerns expressed by Michael Heseltine, President of the Board of Trade, about signing a PII certificate before the prosecution. Mr Heseltine, who said he feared he would be accused of being involved in a cover-up, only signed after being told by Sir Nicholas that he had no choice.

Sir Richard said major responsibility for the inadequacy of the instructions to Mr Moses should be borne by

A 'grudging' government attitude towards disclosure is criticised. In contrast, the Security Service and Secret Intelligence Service were willing to disclose material

The immediate reason for the collapse of the Matrix Churchill trial in November 1992 was the apparent inconsistencies between defence minister Alan Clark's evidence in court and his earlier witness statement.

Sir Richard also identifies shortcomings in the role of Customs, who failed to properly investigate the two lines of defence anticipated in the case.

The first was that the Government, in the shape of Mr Clark, had encouraged the machine tool manufacturers to suppress their knowledge of the intended use of the tools in the production of munitions.

The second was the fact that the Government was aware of - and in fact did not

'The issues that had been raised by Mr Heseltine's stand did not fall into the category of mundane, routine, run of the mill issues that could properly be left to officials'

In his final paragraph in the section of his report devoted to the Matrix Churchill case, which has been seized upon by the Government, Sir Richard says he charges that ministers who signed the PII certificates were seeking to deprive defendants of the means by which to clear themselves - "not well-founded". Ministers were entitled to rely on advice from their lawyers.

In the Ordtec case, Sir Richard says that the PII certificates signed by Peter Lilley in the case against four executives of the company and in their appeal by Douglas Hurd and Michael Howard did not contribute to the inability of the defendants to obtain the relevant documents.

Ordtec, unlike Matrix Churchill, did not hold a licence for the export of fuse assembly lines or their components to Iraq; their licence was for export to Jordan. One of its directors, Paul Grecian, had provided information to intelligence agencies.

Sir Richard says that in correspondence as the case against the men was being prepared, DTI official Anthony Steadman instituted a "dummy run" application seeking the views of the Foreign Office and the Ministry

'Truth' means whole truth

Holding back information 'undermines democracy'

Sarah Boseley details the report's calls for wide-ranging changes



Tristan Garel-Jones: Had to sign certificate overnight

TIME and again the inquiry heard examples of ministers failing to discharge their obligation to inform and avoid misleading or deceiving Parliament and the public, Sir Richard says.

He cites, for instance, lack of disclosure during parliamentary questions on defence sales policy to Iraq and Iraq in spring 1985 of the existence of the Howe guidelines on the withholding of such information "in the public interest".

If a minister withholds information, it is not a full account, Sir Richard says baldly, and the obligation of ministerial accountability has not been discharged. The public is left unable to make a proper judgment on a government's record and "it undermines... the democratic process."

Sir Richard calls for a re-examination of the justification for a refusal to answer parliamentary questions on sales of arms and defence-related equipment to other

could not be blamed for things which happened in their departments of which they knew nothing and which they could not have foreseen.

But, he says, ministers must be accountable by giving forthright information on the incident so Parliament and the public could judge.

Public Interest Immunity certificates should also be the subject of a comprehensive rethink. PII claims on a class basis - covering a whole category, such as arms to Iraq - should not in future be made. PII claims on the contents of a specific document should also not be made if those documents could help the defence in court. "There is no true balance to be struck" with public interest in such a case, Sir Richard says.

No PII claim on an individual document should be made unless the minister believed "disclosure will cause substantial harm". No minister should be put in the position that Tristan Garel-Jones found himself in, of having to sign a PII certificate overnight. Ministers must have adequate time to reflect on where the public interest lies.

The case for withholding a document should not be made to the court by the same barrister who was conducting the prosecution, Sir Richard says, and where a PII certificate was signed, it should describe the nature of the withheld document in as much detail as possible, so that the defence could assess whether it might help its case.

Sir Richard calls for a "long overdue" review of the Government's powers to impose controls on exports from the United Kingdom. "The present legislative structure, under which government has an unfettered power to impose whatever export controls it wishes and to use those controls for any purposes it thinks fit, should be replaced as soon as practicable."

He wants a thorough review of the extent and nature of any powers the Government ought to have to control exports in peacetime, the way Parliament oversees the use of such powers, the type of goods in question, and the reasons for exercising such control.

Sir Richard would ideally like to see Parliament vote regularly to continue or to ditch any export control sys-

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A near-total boycott, violence and irregularities rob the Zia government of legitimacy, writes Suzanne Goldenberg in Dhaka

Bangladeshis stay away from polls

BANGLADESHI voters turned their backs on Begum Khaleda Zia's government yesterday, observing a near-total boycott of a general election in which none of the main opposition parties took part.

They got elected and thousands of us voted," said Mohammed Akhtar Hussain, a worker at a plastic factory. "They will be busy all night long stamping ballot papers."

Ruling party 'no longer exists on the soil after this verdict'

other reports put the death toll at 14, with many more wounded. Despite a show of force by nearly 300,000 troops and security men, scores of bomb blasts were reported.

"They have gone in quite good numbers and if the three party opposition alliances had not been terrorising people then the turnout would have been even higher."

Sheikh Hasina Wajed, the firebrand opposition leader who is the prime minister's deadliest foe, said 95 per cent of voters had heeded the boycott call of her Awami League and the other opposition parties.

She said her followers would offer "whole-hearted support and co-operation" to President Abdur Rahman Biswas until he could name a supreme court justice to oversee fresh elections.

But BNP men herded people into voting queues whenever reporters appeared and roamed freely around polling stations. There were no opposition representatives at any of the stations visited by this reporter, and most of the poll officers said they did not know the names of opposition candidates.

Moffjil Islam, a factory worker. He and three other men said they were turned away by polling officials who claimed they had already voted. "They said you go, your vote has already been cast."

'Flexible' Dole shifts right

Martin Walker in Concord, New Hampshire
TO THE alarm of Wall Street and despite being 10 points ahead of his Republican presidential rivals in the opinion polls yesterday, Senator Bob Dole is echoing the economic populism of Pat Buchanan and promising to review the controversial North American Free Trade treaty with Mexico.

extremely dangerous and counter-productive." Mr Dole has always been politically flexible, last year telling a New Hampshire audience: "I'll be Ronald Reagan if that's what you want." But for the moment his need to challenge Mr Buchanan is paramount.



Reconstruction effort... Rescuers carry out a man injured when a building in central Beirut collapsed yesterday after workers started to destroy its foundations to drive out squatters. At least two died, eight were hurt and up to 15 were believed to be buried in rubble. The government-sponsored Solidere firm is rebuilding the area. PHOTOGRAPH: ALI MOHAMMED

Palestinians beat 'rude' pharmacist

In the wake of an Amnesty rebuke, Derek Brown reports on police abuses

IN THE past seven days Mousa Aloush has been arrested, accused of selling drugs illegally, beaten up, freed, re-arrested, locked up in a cell, and released again.

around the West Bank towns and in the Gaza Strip. Many are well-behaved; some are, quite simply, thugs.

Not 24 hours before, Abu Jaffar had smilingly declared that there was not a shred of truth in the accusation of beating. He produced a supermarket crate full of the old and allegedly dangerous goods which Mr Aloush had been selling.

Other, more serious, abuses have gone entirely unreported. Last month Bethlehem businessmen were abducted by locally based police, taken to a police station out of town, and tortured.

The amiable police chief in Ramallah, Hassan Asheikh, also denied the beating allegation, and produced Mr Aloush's written assurance that he would never again supply old or dangerous goods.

They used sticks, and three broke. They used a whip and electrical cable!

In another office a few yards away a police major, Abdel Fatah, obligingly confirmed the beating, and said it was the usual way of dealing with prisoners who were not "polite".

others beat and punched him. The soles of his feet were beaten. "They used sticks, and three of them broke. Then they used a whip and a piece of electrical cable. It went on for an hour or two and a hour and a half," said Mr Atalla.

India links nuclear test ban to big power disarmament

Ian Black
Diplomatic Editor
PROSPERS for speedy progress on signing a global nuclear test ban treaty suffered a serious blow yesterday when India insisted it would stand by its demand for parallel talks on disarmament by the five nuclear powers.

China, which has a less advanced nuclear programme, and is still holding out for the right to conduct "peaceful nuclear explosions," is unclear. None of the five nuclear powers, however, is prepared to link a test ban treaty formally to wider disarmament.

Iranian spectre clouds Bahrain's bid for freedom



Other worlds

David Hirst
VIRTUALLY every Arab regime that counts has rallied to Sheikh Issa bin Salman al-Khalifa. The ruler since 1961 of the tiny island state of Bahrain is in trouble again.

nation is growing in other state departments. They are the natural breeding ground for opposition. They tend to look for support to Shi'ite Iran, which once laid claim to the island.

Bahrainis "sitting abroad without national roots" convey its orders to agents within. The state security court, officials say, will furnish irrefutable evidence of Iranian involvement.

for years for hurling stones at armoured cars. The Khalifas are a growing tribe whose 800 menfolk abuse political power to muscle in on state and private enterprise. On this archipelago of only 260 square miles, they have grabbed about half the land, including entire islands, for themselves.

helped muster 25,000 signatures for a petition demanding a return to constitutional rule. In the 1970s, secular nationalists led the movement.

has offered to send troops to the island. One wonders how this square with his own prized — if fraying — "democratic experiment", or with his advocacy of a pluralist democracy to replace Saddam Hussein in Iraq.

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After the spin, the truth

The more Scott is read the more deadly it will prove

THE SCOTT inquiry was an attempt, unprecedented in scale and reach for more than a generation, to shine the searchlight of truth into the most protected places of modern British government.

whole tenor and momentum of the report are that Sir Richard has done the very opposite.

In volume four, for example, he cites "example after example" of failure to honour ministers' obligation to play straight. In volume three Sir Richard talks of the "consistently grudging" attitude of the Government to the disclosure of information to the defence.

More forethought had probably been given for more time by more people to the handling of yesterday than to any day in British politics this decade. This official response to Scott had been years in the consideration, months in the planning and eight vital days in detailed preparation.

Take a second central example: the issue of misleading statements to MPs. To listen to Mr Lang and William Waldegrave last night you might have been forgiven for imagining that the former Foreign Office number two was a shamefully impugned man who had acted honourably throughout.

Yet even with the dice so heavily loaded in his favour, Ian Lang only just held the line for the Government. It was asking a lot for MPs who had only just unwrapped their copies of the 2,000 page, five volume report to do serious damage to Mr Lang's honed official version.

No one who even begins to read the Scott report can fail to see that it is a far more subtle and wide-ranging document than anyone could imagine from listening to the Government's version of it yesterday.

It is already clear that Mr Lang's statement, and the orchestrated Government news management operation last night, were built on the most highly selective quotes from Sir Richard Scott's report and the most tendentious paraphrases of his conclusions.

To imagine that these questions can be settled within a few hours of the publication of the Scott report is simply ridiculous. So it is important to assert the public duty to read the report properly before attempting definitive judgments about its conclusions.

Peers, privilege and the payroll

It is in the Lords' interest to clean up their own backyard

WHILE the Commons was waiting for Scott, the Lords was cleaning its own stables. Yesterday it published the first Register of Lords' Interests showing that 22 peers act as paid advisers for outside interests and a further five are paid lobbyists.

of Chilworth declared an interest when he proposed 56 amendments to the Environment Bill, aimed at reducing controls on waste disposal, while being retained by the Association of Waste Disposal Contractors.

Peers represent no one but themselves. When they speak on subjects they know about conflicts of interest can be an asset: like the Earl of Glasgow, owner of a country park in Ayrshire, speaking on tourism or Lord Weinstock on industry.

Those who pay peers to be consultants are a motley crowd including giants like Glaxo, BT (and, yes, British Gas) to the Bingo Association of Great Britain. Just why a handful of companies out of the hundreds of thousands that exist should pay peers to be consultants is difficult to know.



Letters to the Editor

The bias on the dais

MADELEINE Bunting's article on disestablishment of the Church of England (Church in a state, February 15) repeats the much-quoted view that Christians live in an intrusive secular culture.

practices of intruding into non-believers' lives and, in return, the state should break all links with the Church.

First, our children are forced by law to participate in a religious education system. This would not be so bad if the system did not also avoid any mention of the contradictions in the bible or historical evidence pointing to errors in the same work of fiction.

I AM surprised at the weight you give to a survey of voting patterns of nearly four years ago (Anglican clergy lean to LibDems, February 14). A great deal has changed since the 1992 election.

Second, unless you are prepared to participate in a marriage ceremony that contains at least some religious elements, it is impossible to obtain the usual legal benefits obtained by married couples.

For years, whenever socialists complained of a right-wing bias in the Church, the BBC or the Lords, they were told that these institutions were vital to our democracy because they represented some long-standing national "middle ground".

Third, the state broadcaster promotes Christian views using money obtained from everyone, regardless of whether you happen to be a Christian or not.

Nobody, least of all the Conservative Party, would deny that both major political parties have become more right-wing in the last 15 years. If these institutions really do fulfil the function of holding the middle ground, they must appear to be more left wing.



The Government and its very unaccommodating Housing Bill

DAVID Curry's assurances about the Government's Housing Bill (The government response, Society, February 7) gloss over the fact that thousands of homeless families will be condemned to live longer in insecure temporary accommodation if changes to the homelessness legislation become law.

DAVID CURRY fails to point out that the Housing Bill contains no indication that the supply of rented housing is to be increased to meet the needs of all the people on long waiting lists.

In playing off homeless people against people on the waiting list, Mr Curry misses the point that both are in need of a permanent home.

In fact, the Housing Bill does the reverse: it extends the Right to Buy to new housing-association developments in settlements of over 10,000 people.

Changing the homelessness legislation is not only a draconian attack on some of the country's most vulnerable families; it also conceals the real problem of the shortage of affordable rented housing.

THE proposed Bill means that even those in temporary accommodation after two years will have to be moved to other temporary accommodation.

Hollywouldn't

THE "Warner Brothers Movie World" Theme Park proposed for Hillingdon, (Home News, February 14) sums up in a phrase what is wrong with us. It will destroy a huge tract of our countryside, which is already disappearing fast under the combined onslaught of government, planners, lawyers, road-builders and developers.

Debate from the oil platform

GOVERNMENT oil tax policy has probably become more ununderstanding in recent years, but by no means as much as Dr Routledge, Dr Wright and Will Hutton believe (Letters, February 13).

Given less UK oil and gas production, the country's other energy industries — coal and nuclear power — would have cost the Exchequer even greater subsidies, and/or consumers, even higher prices.

The 3,500 jobs it will supposedly create are precisely the sort of jobs we should not want. Jobs without skills, stupid jobs that stultify the intellect, Mickey Mouse jobs.

Moreover, the higher after-tax returns available to companies as a result of the tax reductions have led to field-exploitation decisions which are capital intensive and thus capable of extracting a higher percentage of the oil in place.

Doctors Rutledge and Wright are incorrect in stating that gross trading profits are defined after deduction of depreciation and depletion charges. The definition in the National Income Accounts Blue Book is clearly before depreciation (and interest). North Sea oil exploitation is highly capital intensive and any reasonable measure of the taxable capacity of the activity must obviously include these costs.

feel intense despair at the fact that this awful scheme is proposed by a so-called Labour peer and will be endorsed by a Labour council. It fully illustrates the dismal truth that the Labour Party — Old and New — simply does not think environmentally.

In the wider energy-sector context, it is worth noting that, in spite of the low tax on oil and gas exploitation, has continued to make a net contribution to state revenue.

Nobody has suggested that exploration and development would have ceased if the pre-1983 fiscal arrangements had been maintained, but plenty of studies have demonstrated that activity levels and taxable capacity would certainly have been reduced.

If Lord Hollick wants to rip up the countryside, give punters "Die Hard" white-knuckle thrills marshalled by poorly paid disaffected workers, and bring in film cameras, why doesn't he put in a bid for the Newbury bypass?

Alzheimer's scores yet again

WE WERE all sorry to hear of the death of the great footballer and club manager, Bob Paisley (Paisley leaves Liverpool mourning, February 15). Mr Paisley, who died at the relatively early age of 77, suffered from Alzheimer's disease, as did other great footballer and manager, Danny Blanchflower.

severe head injury could lead to pathological changes in the brain similar to those in Alzheimer's. Other research has also linked boxing and dementia. It appears that persistent blows, for whatever reason, over a long period of time, may put people at risk of dementia in later life.

DETECTIVES on the trail of the missing porkers (Home News, February 15) should extend their enquiries to the Guardian Valentines pages (February 14). There was only one piglet to be found here this year.

Recent research has highlighted a possible link between developing Alzheimer's disease and playing professional football. The research found that damage and shrinkage of brain tissue was more common among professional footballers than other people. It was also found that

Why the aid minister must resign

YOUR leader on the aid debate (February 14) was thoughtful and thorough. Baroness Chalker's speech on the future of overseas-development policy confirms our worst fears that the Government intends drastically to reduce the ODA's role and status.

MP and I have met with representatives of the UN agencies, the World Bank and the IMF. There is widespread concern that Britain will further cut its contribution to multilateral development programmes with an inevitable loss of influence throughout the world.

A Country Diary

HIGHLANDS: Keeping poultry these days can be difficult with the apparent increase in numbers and distribution of predators. In the last week, someone further up this stretch had lost four geese and he called in to see me and ask advice. He was convinced it was a pine marten and this was based on the fact that he had seen one and pieces of the dead birds had been taken up into trees. I often get such queries and the very first thing I ask is whether the poultry are put into strong hutches every night. In this case, the dozen geese had simply been left to spend the night on a nearby loch only yards away from the house.

killed over three nights — almost certainly by pine martens. When I examined the carcasses at the site, a hooded and carrion crow were feeding on the carcasses, a buzzard nearby had obviously gorged itself and there were fresh fox spraints. As regards the geese, I could only suggest a fox might have been the culprit with other mammals or birds taking pieces up into the trees. My recommendation was to build some sound hutches to keep the birds in overnight. Some people I know have also been "raided" by mink and there are now lands where people have simply stopped keeping poultry as they have lost so many birds, with mink increasingly to blame. Stout hutches however, are not the complete answer as, in the past few years, there have been increasing reports of pine martens taking poultry in daylight and they have been seen in a number of places throughout the Highlands.



Wellington ends British honours

Handwritten signature or note at the bottom of the page.

String of failures undermines attempt by Peking to offer world's cheapest satellite launches

Chinese rocket explodes seconds after lifting off

FROM JONATHAN MIRSKY IN HONG KONG

CHINA'S latest rocket, the 426-tonne Long March 3B, carrying an American-made satellite, veered into the ground and exploded yesterday, 20 seconds after lift-off. At least ten people were injured in a remote region of Sichuan province in western China.

Almost exactly 13 months ago, and also on the eve of the Chinese New Year when people expect good news, a Long March 2E, carrying a Hughes Apstar satellite, exploded 50 seconds after its launch before crashing into a house killing a family of six.

The failure of yesterday's Long March, carrying the three-tonne Intelsat 708, manufactured by Lockheed Martin and owned by International Telecommunications Satellite, is a blow to plans by Rupert Murdoch, chairman and chief

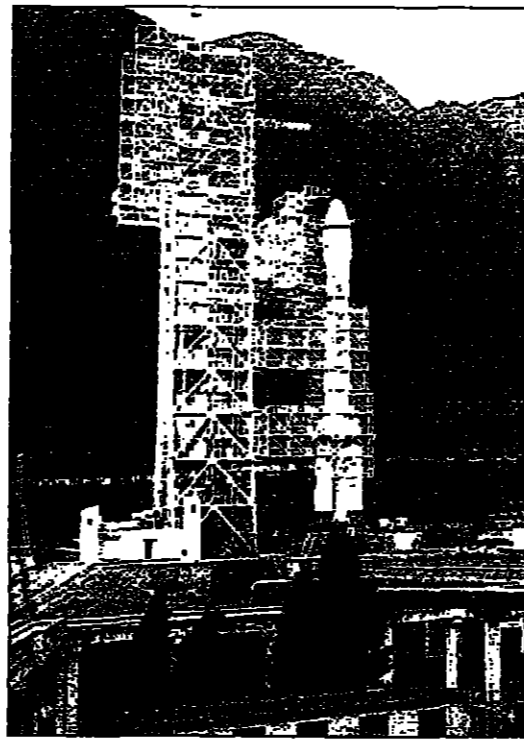
executive of The News Corporation, publisher of *The Times*, to use the satellite for television services in Latin America and to offer video, data and voice services in the Americas, Africa and Europe. A company spokesman said that, despite the failed launch, services will begin in May. "News Corp has a number of other real options, and will disclose them shortly."

With its Long March rockets China is attempting to offer

the world's lowest prices for satellite launches, half the cost of Western launches, which themselves are half the price charged by Japan's National Space Development Agency. But a Japanese scientist yesterday noted that the global race to cut costs increases the risk of failure.

The Intelsat 708 and the Long March rocket were insured for \$204.7 million (£136.5 million). The cost of insurance for launches is now expected to rise steeply.

Although China has an active military ballistic missile programme, experts agree it is not a simple task to move from that to civilian satellite launches. Only six of China's 40 launches since 1970 have failed. Two were joint Chinese-foreign ventures. The Chinese tend to emphasise, as



The Xichang Space Centre, from where the Long March rocket lifted off yesterday. It veered off course, centre, before falling back to earth in flames, right



they did yesterday, that the Long March rockets are of high quality, leaving the suggestion that the problem may lie with the satellites.

Chinese live television transmission of yesterday's launch was similar to last year's disaster. Viewers saw

the launch but transmission stopped before the rocket hit the ground. Last year viewers saw a red streak, a fireball, and the stunned looks of officials in the control room. Then a presenter said: "This has not succeeded," and transmission ceased. No further

information appeared for days and newspapers buried the story.

Yesterday's first official account, by the New China News Agency, stated only that the rocket had failed to carry the satellite into orbit. Later Shen Guofan, Foreign Minis-

try spokesman, said that although the cause was not known, "I don't think the accident will cause an adverse impact on China's co-operation with other countries."

Xichang, the nearest town to the launch site, is a small place surrounded by low mountains

and poorly provided with hospitals. A local medical spokesman said only that doctors had been sent down the valley to the launch site, which is at the end of a country road winding through paddies, and that the local hospitals were on alert.



Insurers are likely to raise premiums

BY ANJANA AHUJA

THE losses of Intelsat 708 and Long March 3B — the first rocket to be built entirely in China — have come at a bad time.

China's ambitious space plans were just coming to fruition, with the United States agreeing last year to allow the country to enter the lucrative commercial launch market.

The space programme was also beginning to recover from the adverse publicity surrounding the loss of the Apstar satellite just after its launch in January last year. The explosion, which China initially blamed on a malfunctioning satellite but was later attributed to wind shear, killed six people.

Things began to look rosier at the end of last year. A Long March 2E rocket successfully launched the \$200 million (£130 million) AsiaSat-2.

The launch was followed by triumphant announcements

of plans to put 25 domestic and foreign satellites in orbit by 1998. Only this month, the American Congress approved a plan to export three American-built satellites for launch aboard Chinese rockets.

Even if satellite manufacturers are still attracted by the cut-price costs of Chinese launches the insurance premiums may prove too high. In 1994, the insurance industry paid out more for lost satellites than it collected in premiums.

Things are not going smoothly in space for Japan either. Tokyo's attempt to develop a space shuttle programme has been interrupted by the loss of Hyflet, a hypersonic plane which would have travelled to and from the international space station. After launch from the Tanegashima Space Centre two days ago, it re-entered successfully but the parachute failed.



Bolger: move reflects country's independence

Wellington ends British honours

Wellington: New Zealand scrapped most of the honours it inherited from Britain yesterday, but is to retain the titles of knight and dame for the top honour holders, Jim Bolger, the Prime Minister, said.

Honours such as Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire (KBE) and the lesser Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) are to be replaced by a graduated system of orders of merit.

The decision was taken by the ruling National Party caucus. Mr Bolger denied it was a new step on the road to republicanism, saying it reflected the country's independence. "It will be a distinctly New Zealand system."

The Queen will still award the honours according to recommendations made by the Government. (AFP)

Moroccan Customs officers charged

FROM MARK HUBAND IN RABAT

ALMOST the entire senior management of Morocco's customs office has been charged with fraud and smuggling after a crackdown on racketeers and drug traffickers. The drive also saw 16 Moroccans and three Spaniards in court this week charged with smuggling cannabis to Europe.

Among those accused of customs fraud was Ahmed Hamza, the officer leading the Government's campaign against fraud within the customs service. He was charged along with Ali Amor, the director-general of customs, and 17 officials, including Jai Hokaimi Hamed, Mr Amor's predecessor. They will appear in court on March 7, charged with complicity in smuggling and professional misconduct.

The arrests came two months after the Government announced its intention of swooping on professional smugglers responsible for bringing contraband electrical goods, clothes and food into Morocco in a business estimated at £2 billion a year in lost duties.

In a separate smuggling case two brothers and their accomplices were this week jailed for up to five years for smuggling goods into Morocco, and fined £600,000.

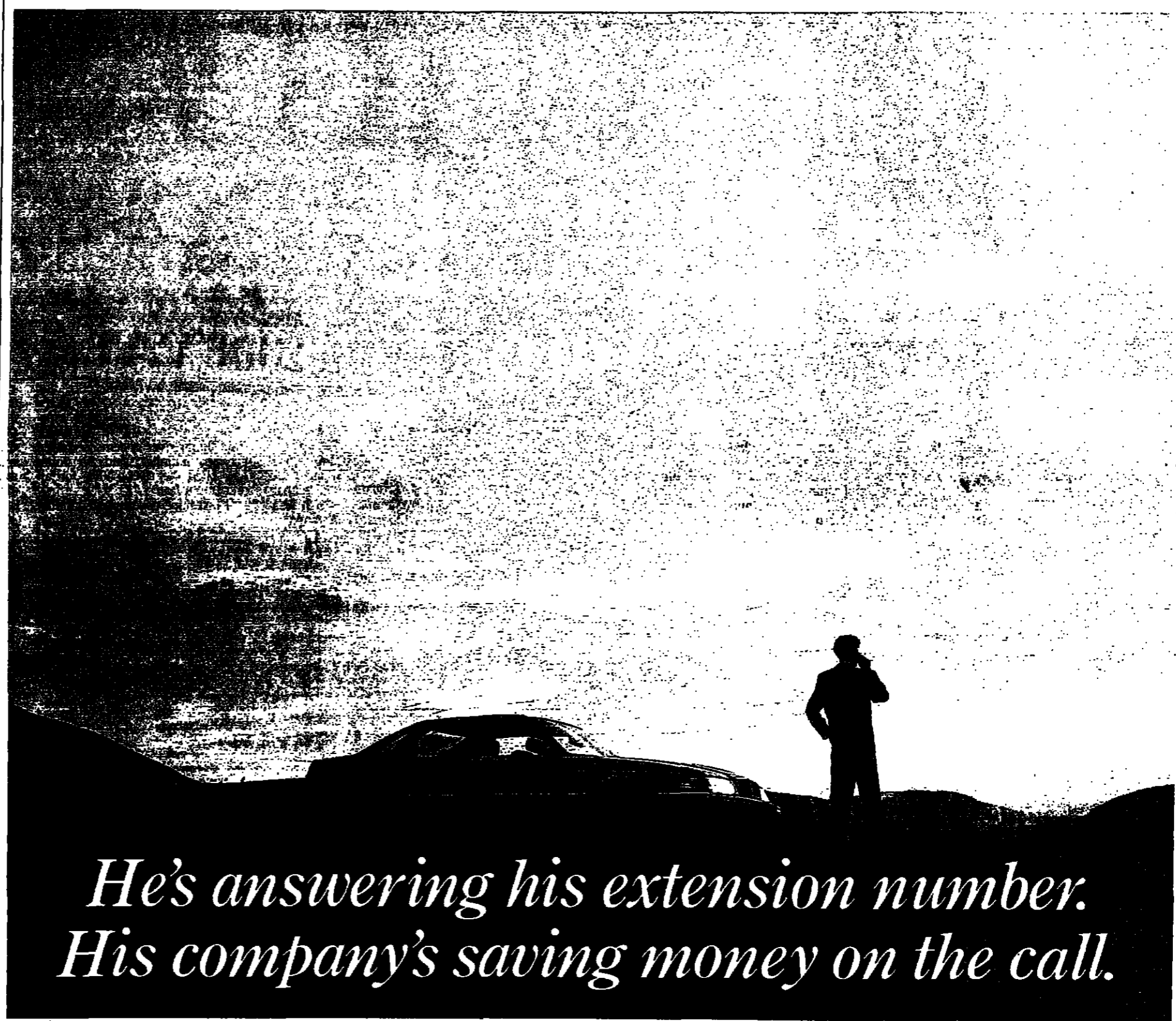
Rwandan refugees seized

Kibumba Camp, Zaire: Soldiers trying to force Rwandan refugees to go home closed down businesses in the largest camp yesterday after arresting ten people for alleged intimidation.

United Nations officials said five people were arrested on Tuesday and five on Wednesday in an attempt to prevent the intimidation of Rwandans thinking of returning home.

sioner for Refugees, said he expected arrests in other camps. He also expected Zaire to impose an economic embargo except for food, water and health services.

In the muddy alleyways of Kibumba's tarpaulin city, all but a few shops were closed and streets were full of anxious men clutching radios. Refugees accused troops of destroying their stalls and confiscating their wares. But



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'It is my duty to unite healthy forces in society to prevent possible upheavals, including civil war'

Yeltsin seeks second term as President

FROM RICHARD BEESTON IN MOSCOW

After months of speculation about his political future yesterday when he announced his candidacy for re-election in June's presidential poll. Despite widespread unpopularity and doubts about his health, the Russian leader gave a creditable performance before supporters in searchlight Yekaterinburg, his home town in the Ural mountains, where he launched his bid to recapture the mass support which swept him to power five years ago.

"It is my duty, as a human being and as a citizen and as a politician who initiated reform, to unite all healthy forces in society and to prevent possible upheavals, including a civil war," he said. "That is why I have decided to run for the Russian presidency and I announce this decision here in my home town."

President Yeltsin did not spell out his campaign strategy nor details of his electoral platform. However, it seemed clear that he plans to travel widely in the run-up to the June 16 election in the

hope of rebuilding a popular following. Much of his rhetoric was directed against the danger of a Communist victory, which he predicted would return Russia to the darkest days of Soviet rule and even provoke a new civil war.

"At these elections, not only I, but the whole of Russia will lay on the railway tracks and we must do everything possible so that we, Russians, and our country do not perish beneath the red wheel of the [Communist] past," he said.

As for policies, the Russian leader insisted that he was committed to economic reforms, democracy and human rights. But he added that the course of change would have to be altered to cushion the effects of liberalisation.

President Yeltsin said he would find funds to help poverty-stricken pensioners and unpaid workers and that he would work to eradicate government corruption and organised crime. As a first step, he hinted at a purge of the leadership, suggesting that Gen-

eral Pavel Grachev, the unpopular Defence Minister, may be sacked and that Aleksei Ilyushenko, the former Prosecutor-General, may be tried on corruption charges along with 1,200 other officials.

He also made it clear that he planned to deal with the Chechen separatist conflict with an iron hand. He ruled out the possibility of a military withdrawal and suggested at one point during a walkabout in the city that Chechen rebel leaders should be arrested and shot.

In spite of two heart attacks last year, prolonged absences from public view and mounting criticism of his autocratic leadership style, President Yeltsin proved yesterday that he still has the energy for the hard campaign before polling day on June 16.

"We are stronger than those who, throughout the years, have been putting spokes in the wheels and impeding our progress towards a great and free Russia and towards a decent life for all Russians," he declared.



President Yeltsin announcing yesterday that he will seek re-election

Zyuganov pick as Communist standard-bearer

FROM THOMAS DE WAAL IN MOSCOW

THE Russian Communist Party nominated Gennadi Zyuganov, its leader, as its presidential candidate yesterday after intensive negotiations to find a figure to unite the Left against President Yeltsin.

As expected, delegates at a one-day party conference unanimously endorsed Mr Zyuganov with a flutter of red voting cards before standing to sing the *Internationale*.

The party leader called Mr Yeltsin "a fairly vulnerable figure" and said the re-election of the President "would mean the destruction of our country".

A wide range of smaller left-wing groups have been persuaded over the past few weeks to back Mr Zyuganov as the "united candidate" of the Russian Left. But the price of unanimity for Mr Zyuganov was a pledge to support the party favourite and popular Siberian politi-

cian Aman Tuley "reserve" candidate. Tuleyev said he would draw later in favour of Mr Zyuganov, 51, maths teacher from an eastern region of Russia, emerged as a credible figure, acceptable to most of the party's members. His strengths are party organisation and a maverick leader, and side was revealed in a ponderous speech in Yekaterinburg, and listened to silence. He made few policy proposals and most of his rhetoric long catalogue of the current regime.

"Citizens in Russia anticipated only three things in one of his eloquent lines: 'The right to the right to be answered nothing.'"

The Communist party, an estimated membership of half a million, has organisational bases in regions, which will conduct a strong campaign. Its problems stem from its fashioned image. Mr Zyuganov's delegates day's conference appear to be late middle-aged ranking Soviet bureaucrats who had failed to adjust to the changes of the Gorbachev years.

Several guest speakers warned of the danger that the party needed to capture the presidential base in the June 16 election. In December's parliamentary elections, it topped the poll with 15 million votes.

A repeat of that will guarantee Mr Zyuganov a run-off in the pre-election against Mr Yeltsin. Another candidate, but he will need million votes.

Hopefuls set for vain race

THE front-runners in the Russian presidential race are likely to be joined by scores of other hopefuls (Richard Beeston writes). Their supporters are currently gathering the one million signatures necessary for a candidate to be accepted by the Central Electoral Commission by the April 16 deadline.

As with the parliamentary polls in December, when 43 parties competed for the Duma, the lower house of parliament, voters will be able to choose from a bewildering array of candidates, who have little chance of winning.

If no one receives more than 50 per cent of the first round vote, a run-off takes place between the two leading candidates a month later. Only in this final stage will it become clear who is to become Russia's next leader.

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Top British officials in EU subject to corruption claim

THE European Commission hopes to reach a speedy decision on whether to open proceedings against Michael Emerson, one of its most senior British officials, who is under investigation over allegations that he exploited personal gain his posting as EU Ambassador to Moscow.

A spokesman for Jacques Santer, the Commission President, said he was determined to root out any misconduct by officials and was "very keen to clarify these matters as soon as possible". He confirmed that Mr Emerson, 55, who played a key role in the setting up of the European Monetary System and served as a close adviser to Roy Jenkins when he was Commission President, was the subject of an internal inquiry. "We are also listening to Mr Emerson to hear what he has to say," he said.

Mr Emerson, an Oxford-educated economist who has served in the Commission since 1973, returned from Moscow last month at end of a five-year tour as the EU's first representative at ambassadorial level in the Russian capital. He is now working in the section responsible for rela-

tions with Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union.

Close friends said they were amazed by the attack against Mr Emerson, whose wife, Barbara, is a successful history writer. "He is not at all the chap who would be involved in something shady," a long-time friend said. "He is most a somewhat unperson."

A colleague in the EC Affairs Directorate who Emerson has spent most of his Brussels career and one of the top officials in the "very energetic, ambitious," but added: "I of him having his finger in the till would be surprising."

One of the chief tasks of Moscow representatives oversee the disbursement of millions of pounds in EU aid to Russian businesses enterprises. The Commission had received reports from a non-Russian source which alleged that Emerson had used his position to direct funds to his own businesses in which he had an interest, a Commission source said.

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V S S R U P B N P T I O T D S T C G S I

Diary
Matthew Norman

CONCERNS for my missing friend Dr Julian Lewis, the radio ham of Tory Central Office, reach a new pitch of dementia, but I have stopped leaving my messages on his answering machine. For the last one was clearly intercepted by the robotic clone with which he has been replaced by the evil infiltrators who have kidnapped him. A week ago, the clone told my so-called rival on the London Evening Standard that a perfectly innocuous piece "has made me look a complete wanker", and that as a result he would not speak to her for six months. Dread words. On hearing this, I instantly rang Julian at Central Office to warn him, in a whisper, about the clone's behaviour. Before long, the clone rang my so-called rival back, and told her that, if she wrote a letter to the Guardian decrying my account of the incident, the sentence of silence would be commuted from three to six months. Julian, if you are reading this, for God's sake send a sign that you are well. The clone is acting like a pompous narcissist, and is making you look foolish. Come back, before it is too late.

MEANWHILE, another so-called rival, the diarist at the downmarket Daily Express, has cruelly maligned my old friends the Folletts. The hack claims to have received a fax from Ken and Barbie headed "The Follett Office", which lists the entire entourage — the "executive secretary" is Terri, Pam is in charge of "press and diary", information technology is in the hands of Victoria, while Ann looks after "the Follett Trust". The Follett Trust! An entourage!! The Follett Office!!! As if Ken and Barbie, of all people, could possibly be so pretentious. Since the Folletts themselves are too self-effacing to brag, I am sure they will never complain, the Diary will be demanding a retraction on their behalf.

IN the world of tourist information, local knowledge has long been considered a benefit, but it is time for a rethink. Those who wish for a full brochure on the charms of Staffordshire — a county which includes Alton Towers and the Peak District — are invited by newspaper adverts to call a Linkline telephone number. Alternatively, write to Staffordshire Tourism at PO Box 27, Barnstaple EX31 1YW. For those who like to leave nothing to chance when they write an address, the word that should go between the Barnstaple and the EX31 is, of course, Devon.

EXCELLENT news from the heart of New Labour: there is now such a thing as "The Two Thousand Club" for regular cash donors. Among the more irresistibly tempting aspects of membership is the right to attend functions at Millbank, such as the forthcoming series of evenings with two outstanding campaigners — the icy Blair apparition Margaret Thatcher and the MP for Hartlepool, Mr Mandy (or "Peter" as Miss McDonagh bafflingly calls him) Manselton. The duo, who senior party sources describe as "New Labour's answer to Anne and Nick", will explain the future, and how it works. Although the Diary's modest budget will not run to membership, it will run to a modest fee to any member who cares to pass on a full report of the soiree.

AN intriguing debate has broken out on the pages of Earth First!, a journal of the radical ecological group. An American reader has written to the problem page, enquiring as to whether felatio (the produce rather than the act itself) is suitable for vegans. The dilemma, as the correspondent sees it, is that while no animal is harmed in the process, vegans eat no animal produce. It is very confusing, so I will be asking my friend Mary Whitehouse for an adjudication next week. I first thing I spoke to her yesterday but Thursday is her tantric-sex workshop and she never gets home before nightfall.



Aix and pains of critics in aspic

Commentary
Peter Preston

JEREMY ISAACS once asked a particularly interesting question. (Which doesn't mean that, face to face on television, he doesn't usually ask interesting questions; or that, panning doggedly round the chaos of The House, he and his team don't occasionally seem a giant question mark.) But this was a year or four ago and we were lurching with the Guardian's opera set. Covent Garden had just mounted yet another high finance production — pavilioned in roses and ecstatic applause. Our critics, like other critics, were not so bowled over.

The trouble with you lot, said Isaacs, beginning a thoroughly enjoyable rant, is that you're not remotely typical — you're bloody atypical. I was there last night. The audience was young and enth-

usiastic. They loved it. They haven't done nothing but go to opera for a living for the past 30 years, comparing notes and drinking Reisinger together in their tedious little world. They don't care whether last night was better or worse than Aix in 1978 or Milan in 1985. They didn't see the definitive interpretation in Verona in 1949. They went to a show. They loved it. Who needs all this historical, internalised, self-referential, preening, snobbish crap? End of round one. (I paraphrase because all the lunchers were too stunned to take notes). There were at least nine more rounds as the critics fought back before coffee stopped play. But there was still a bit of food for thought left on the floor.

Different art forms, and the writers who follow them, do operate to different rules. Most opera is old opera; most opera critics have been on the job for years, comparing and contrasting come naturally, the weight of the past heavy on the stomach of the present. And, because the performance itself — recordings apart — has gone forever, recalled only in the mind's eye, subjectivity is total, which means the scope for irreconcilable argument is total too.

McQueen/Sam Peckinpah thriller, The Getaway. Again, it was inferior, routine, not worth the effort. But that was almost exactly what the critics of 1972 (alas, often the same critics as in 1993) said about the Peckinpah original. At which point you can almost hear Jeremy Isaacs thumping the table. Something happens down the long time tunnel of critical memory. Something which didn't seem anything to shout about in the fifties can suddenly be deemed a retrospective classic 22 years on — merely because a different director and a different cast have remade the same yarn.

What TV critic would think of comparing Seinfeld with Sergeant Bilko or NYPD with Z-Cars?

What TV critic would think of comparing Seinfeld with Sergeant Bilko or NYPD with Z-Cars? The old film hasn't changed one frame or one jot. It has burgeoned in reputation through Critical Roseate Memory Creep — by being something that buffs and experts know about in a quasi-academic way. But the audience for Sabrina in Camberley or Carlisle this week is not composed of experts, or indeed of people who were born in 1972, let alone in 1954. This is a young audience taking 125 minutes of cinema on its own merits.

taste. But (thump, thump) lorry! Those from 1954 are a practical irrelevance; the deluding, changing past itself is an irrelevance. Vault over into the most read criticism of the most popular art form — television — and the point slots home. When did you find a (non-med student) critic who would even think of comparing Seinfeld with Sergeant Bilko or NYPD with Z-Cars? It isn't done. It isn't expected. Television arrives instantly and vanishes instantly into the nether world of off-peak respectability. It carries no history with it. Its criticism lies on the far side of the opera moon.

We all know — the simplest refrain — that things ain't what they used to be. Whether they're Aida in Verona in 1959 or grammar schools or probity in British public life before the Scott report, the song may be indefinitely extrapolated. You will hear it far beyond the arts whenever people meet to discuss politics or sport or the taste of real ale; the past summoned to shade perceptions of the present with all the ritual thunder of a Daily Mail leader column. But life and memory, dissected and compared, aren't quite like that. I'm sure Jeremy Isaacs — who came to opera from television, from assistants to whatever, people who were not wholly "politicalised" — feel much more at ease when they actually happen.

Gerry's truth embroidered on my heart



Bel Littlejohn

THAT was a brave decision, and I am truly glad to be associated with the newspaper that made it. And nice timing, too. I'm talking, of course, about the Guardian's courageous stand in letting Mr Gerry Adams put over his point of view on this page on Monday, to tie in with the IRA explosion in Canary Wharf. Shame, in a way, that we couldn't have printed it on the Friday morning, so as to get people in the right mood for the evening's explosion. Sometimes, if you explain these things beforehand, then ordinary decent people — newswriters, shop assistants or whatever, people not yet wholly "politicalised" — feel much more at ease when they actually happen.

senior commentator, broadcaster and opinion-former, to comment on the delicate Ulster situation. I attack the question with a depth of informed passion ("In the words of the Paul McCartney song, let's for God's sake give Ulster back to the Northern Irish!" I announced bravely on Question Time last week) that frankly gives some of my fellow panellists — a lot of them just locals from the province, unaware of the larger international issues involved — a much-needed kick. Back to Gerry. Believe me, he's a genuinely lovely guy who hates to see a little child blown up in a necessary if regrettable retaliatory gesture against the stubborn post-colonial aspirations of a discredited British government. His moving article in Monday's Guardian offers generous support to the parents and friends of the victims. At this time my thoughts are with the families of those killed and injured," he writes, movingly. "I understand the pain they are going through." Personally, I hope someone out there will consider those beautiful words on a lovely Northern Irish linen tea-cloth, so that those of us who are forced to live far away from that war-torn province can hang them over our AGAs and look to them for sugar in our darkest hours.

CAN I share some very personal tales about Gerry? As a schoolboy, he proved himself a great leader of men. When his fellow pupils would start to kick one of the more obnoxious new boys in the shins, Gerry would remain calm and thoughtful. "It is wholly regrettable to me that this action was provoked by the unwarranted attitudes of the young," he had in question, who must bear total responsibility for the collapse of the non-shin-kicking agreement," he would announce, viewing the kickings with an understanding smile, enjoying them, yes, but never condoning them. As a young man, he always had a tremendous sense of occasion, insisting on nipping down to the barber to have his hair re-layered before waving his men off to do battle against the forces of imperialism. Yet he was also always endearingly self-effacing, taking pains to insist that others less well-known than himself should be seen at the head of Troops Out march, particularly if it seemed possible that the glory of full-scale battle involving death and injury might be theirs to treasure. It was no doubt his inner humanity that inspired him to write the great, heart-stopping line in Monday's paper: "It is crucial that people sit down around the table and treat each other as human beings." And believe me, no one knows better than Gerry what a human being needs. He's alive or, well, not so alive. Cheers, Gerry!



Trade is the tyrant

The arms-to-Iraq fiasco reveals how far Western countries will go to maintain their industrial and military potency, says Martin Woolcott

THE truth crisis has become the defining calamity of modern democracies. If the grandparents in the Iran-Contra affair, now the progeny are all around us, from the dirty-war scandal in Spain to the Berlusconi trial in Italy and the Scott inquiry in Britain. Different in origin and scale as they are, and the case of the Iraq guidelines is at the low end of the scale, they are all affairs which lend themselves to handwringing. They reinforce the view that all is conspiracy, that everything divides into misleading facade and a dirty reality. Yet sensible citizens know that free politics and truth are close but uncomfortable companions. They can never part company but, equally, can never be quite as one. Society's own hypocrisies are projected on government, demanding that public homage to certain virtuous objectives be combined with a vigorous pursuit of material interests. The covert arm of government, the legacy of world wars and the East-West conflict, is in itself a symbol of the fact that some acts of power are both illegitimate and secret, the reconciliation of which with traditions of disclosure is always difficult and often impossible. Yet we should do justice to politicians in Western societies in assuming that they do not lightly break or bend the rules. When they do there is usually an element of desperation, and one of the problems is that the desperation is sometimes as much a secret as the covert policies which spring from it. In recent scan-

ing capacity. There is a merry-go-round here on which a dozen advanced countries ride. Their pretensions in aerospace, in communications technology, in electronics generally, in both military and civilian advanced products, cannot be indefinitely sustained. Nearly all have staged strategic retreats from certain sectors, and gone into more and more joint projects. But still, it is not enough. Nobody should underestimate the frightening aspects of these developments. Even the revolution in Russia can be seen as a special instance of them, as the Soviet Union gave up the struggle to maintain even a semblance of technological equality with the United States. China's recent decision to end conscription, and the decisions which await him on the future of French arms manufacturing, belong in the same category. So do the troubles of Daimler-Benz and of Pöcher in Holland. Even the United States, the solitary country still able to maintain a full military-industrial base, is having difficulties, with President Clinton rigging up Gulf monies to sell tanks personally. Under these circumstances, trade seems to become not a matter of profit or jobs nor of influence but of staying off the death of industries, and ultimately, perhaps, of ceasing to be an advanced economy. It may be objected that the relatively small sums involved in supplying Iraq in the late eighties can hardly have made this kind of difference. But the question is not the amount but the mood of the time, when the French were picking up large arms orders and when all Western countries were competing for the quasi-military and purely civilian business which every body calculated. Iraq, still afloat, or, at least, could pay for later. The ceasefire

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Buchanan hit by linking of aide to extremist groups

FROM MARTIN FLETCHER IN NASHUA, NEW HAMPSHIRE

PAT BUCHANAN'S surging presidential campaign ran into trouble yesterday when a Washington watchdog group linked one of his four campaign co-chairmen to the militia and white supremacist movements.

Mr Buchanan said the co-chairman, Larry Pratt, denied the charges and had temporarily left the campaign to disprove them, but the allegations reinforced charges of extremism being levelled at the conservative commentator.

by other Republican candidates. Robert Dole, the Senate leader, launched an advertisement suggesting Mr Buchanan wanted to give South Korea nuclear weapons and quoting him once saying that "women are simply not endowed by nature with the measure of single-minded ambition and the will to succeed".

The narrator concludes: "He's too extreme. He can't beat Bill Clinton."

With five days left before the New Hampshire primary, the

candidates were last night holding a final televised debate, and a flurry of new polls showed support for Steve Forbes plummeting while Mr Buchanan and Lamar Alexander close on Mr Dole.

Mr Forbes' predicament was obvious from the media scrum that greeted him when he arrived for a Rotary Club lunch in picturesque Milford on Wednesday. In size it matched those he attracted before his disastrous fourth place in Monday's Iowa caucuses. However, this time the journalists were not there because the free-spending publisher was the "hot" candidate, but because they scented blood. They pinned Mr Forbes against the side of his bus and skewered him with questions.

Mr Alexander is the new "hot" candidate. On Wednesday night, despite a fearful snowstorm, the villagers of Londonderry packed their church hall to hear the former Tennessee Governor and converts wearing his trade mark red-and-black checked shirt suddenly seemed everywhere.



Lamar Alexander, the new "hot" Republican candidate, goes campaigning in Milford, New Hampshire

This was transparently a man on a high. He spoke and answered questions for more than an hour. He was unable to name the price of milk, an embarrassing slip for a candidate who claims to be from the "real world" outside Washington, but capped an otherwise virtuoso performance by playing Alexander's Ragtime Band and God Bless America on the piano. He ended Wednesday in the living room of the Pfaff family in the village of Hooksett. Mr Alexander stood before the fire. The Pfaffs and their neighbours sat around on sofas. "I have new ideas, Senator Dole has no ideas and Pat Buchanan has wrong ideas," he told them.

Another measure of Mr Alexander's rise is the appearance of the muckrakers. Newspapers reported on how Mr Alexander parlayed his political status into a \$3 million fortune through "sweatheart" deals.

"While there have been no suggestions of illegality, some of the Alexander family's windfalls make Hillary Rodham Clinton's ability to turn a \$1,000 investment in hog belly futures into \$100,000 look like winning the pot in penny ante poker," the Boston Globe said.

Mr Dole is running the classic frontrunner's campaign, piling up endorsements and avoiding gaffes. He is taking this to ridiculous extremes. He called a press conference for William Weld, Governor of Massachusetts, and George Allen, Governor of Virginia, to endorse him, but did not attend.

Rival derides Dole

FROM TOM RHODES IN WASHINGTON

THE contents of previously undisclosed tapes involving discussions between Newt Gingrich, the House Speaker, and his allies revealed a series of negative comments about Robert Dole yesterday.

In the tapes, which were published by the Los Angeles Times, Mr Gingrich and his conservative activists scorned the senator for shunning their crusade to plot the Republican revolution.

the right dinner is more important than winning". Although recorded in 1989 and 1990, the tapes can only further undermine attempts by the Senate majority leader to secure his party's presidential nomination after a weak victory in the Iowa caucuses.

Mr Dole, who is campaigning in the critical New Hampshire primary, was described by Mr Gingrich at meetings of the political action committee as a person who "frankly doesn't give a damn" about fighting for conservative causes and a reactionary elder overseeing a "passive, backward-oriented" party faction.

Swedish boy 'is Mitterrand's son'

FROM BEN MACINTYRE IN PARIS

A SWEDISH journalist and close friend of the late Francois Mitterrand claims she is being hounded by the European press over rumours that the former President may be the father of her son, seven, according to a French magazine.

Christina Forsne, the former Paris correspondent for a Swedish newspaper, has refused to deny Mitterrand is the father of Ravn. VSD reported yesterday.

daughter, Mazarine Pinget, 21. Both she and her mother, Anne Pinget, attended the Socialist leader's funeral last month.

Ms Forsne reportedly replied that the former President's widow "is more than aware of my existence". The suggestion that the boy is Mitterrand's son is open to serious doubt. The child pictured in the magazine is blond, whereas all the former President's three children have dark colouring.

In 1989, when Ravn was conceived, Mitterrand was undergoing intensive treatment for prostate cancer, of which impotence is a common side-effect.



Samper: convinced that there is no evidence

Samper charged over poll

FROM DAVID ADAMS IN MIAMI

PRESIDENT SAMPER of Colombia is one step closer to impeachment after the Attorney-General charged him with drug-related electoral fraud.

The President's fate now lies in the hands of Congress, which is controlled by Senator Samper's ruling Liberal Party. The charges were presented to a congressional committee, which must decide whether there is sufficient evidence for impeachment. He is the first President to face such charges.

Señor Samper reacted immediately saying he was "absolutely calm", and convinced that there is no evidence. Some observers agree, but few believe he is innocent. The latest group to question his word is the Roman Catholic Church.

Señor Samper's party is accused of receiving more than \$6 million (£3.8 million) from the Cali cocaine cartel to finance his 1994 election campaign. The charges also include illicit enrichment and obstruction of justice.

Bargain bonanza as Dubai stages world's biggest sale

BY MICHAEL BINYON, DIPLOMATIC EDITOR

THE doors of more than 2,000 shops in the tiny emirate of Dubai were flung open yesterday as the biggest sale in the world began.

Thousands of bargain hunters — including hordes of Britons and Americans — are flocking to the Gulf to take advantage of compulsory price cuts of up to 70 per cent.

There was no need to haggle as all Dubai became a giant souk. Gold, silver, Japanese cameras, Parisian silk scarves and all the goods traditionally found in the world's most unlikely retailing capital are there to be snapped up.

Shopping in Dubai, once a quiet backwater where only bronzed pearl-divers broke the tranquil ripples of daily life, has long been a national obsession. Smuggling has fattened the economy, and now the little emirate — part of the United Arab Emirates — ranks as one of the world's top tourist destinations.

Before 1970, Dubai was little more than a collection of low, mud-built houses. Oil transformed everything. But the gush of money is limited: Dubai's oil reserves are likely to run out in 2005. Retailing is the hope for future prosperity, and the emirate's sale is an attempt to boost that trade.

Though the summer temperatures may top 50 C (122 F), air conditioning in the miles of marble malls has made shopping bearable even then, and in the depths of winter the air is a balmy 22 C (71 F) and the sea still tempting.

The six-week festival is designed to lure almost 1.5 million shoppers from every continent. They are expected to spend more than a billion

dirhams (£178 million), and the cost of hotels and services may bring in seven times as much — a staggering sum for a country with a population of 550,000.

Dubai has long boasted that its prices are the lowest in the world. The lure for its neighbours in the north, especially in former communist countries, is irresistible, and virtually every snowy Siberian town or Uzbek market still sells garments, watches and electronics taken back in casefuls by plane-loads of Russians and Central Asians.

Dubai has asked cultural icons from its favourite shopping nations to give the festival a boost. The Moscow State Philharmonic Orchestra, the St Petersburg Ballet and Julian Lloyd Webber, the British cellist, have been invited. America will be represented by Minnie Mouse and 29 companions.

But such flights of cultural fancy are probably far from the minds of the 300,000 foreign shoppers. They are more likely to be lured by the sporting programme Dubai has laid on: the Tennis Open, which started yesterday, the Dubai Desert Classic golf tournament from March 14-17, and the world's richest horse race, with a purse totalling £2,500 — the Dubai World Cup on March 27.

Dubai's rulers have long been sport and shopping crazy. Sheikh Muhammad bin Rashid al-Maktoum owns more thoroughbred racehorses than any other breeder in the world. Cricket is also making inroads among the huge immigrant population from India and Pakistan.

US calls Bosnia summit

America has summoned the three leaders who signed the Dayton peace accord to a summit in Rome tomorrow in an attempt to overcome the impasse in Bosnia and prevent the accord unravelling (Michael Binyon writes).

Italy, which holds the European Union presidency, has been chosen as the venue of the first of what are planned as regular meetings between the Presidents of Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia. The tension in Mostar and Croatian opposition to the work of Hans Koschnick, the EU-appointed administrator, are high on the agenda.

Pakistan arms deal threatened

Washington: The Clinton Administration, locked in a row with Pakistan over its suspected purchase of nuclear equipment from China, has said that shipments to Islamabad of American military aircraft and arms may be delayed (Tom Rhodes writes).

During a visit to Washington this week Nawaz Sharif, the former Pakistani Prime Minister, appealed to the White House to ignore its own intelligence and complete the \$368 million (£240 million) weapons deal authorised by Congress last year.

Voters stay away in Bangladesh

Dhaka: Huge numbers of Bangladeshi voters stayed away from parliamentary elections, frightened by violence in which at least 14 people were killed, or observing an opposition boycott. Despite a show of force by nearly 300,000 security personnel, just six to 12 per cent of voters turned out in many places. However, Begum Khalida Zia, the Prime Minister, said she was pleased with the process. She has said she will form the next government even if there is a turnout of only 10 per cent. (Reuter)

Trial of Rabin's killer adjourned

Jerusalem: The trial of Yigal Amir, 25, the self-confessed assassin of Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli Prime Minister, was adjourned until March 3 to enable him to undergo more psychiatric tests ordered by Edmund Levy, the trial judge (Christopher Walker writes). Amir's lawyers said the tests could lead to a new defence strategy focused on his emotional state at the time of the killing.

Russians raze Grozny palace

Grozny: Russian soldiers used high explosive to demolish Chechnya's ruined presidential palace, a symbol of resistance to Russian troops in the regional capital. Troops and armoured cars sealed off central Grozny for the demolition, which was said to be for safety reasons. (Reuter)

Kabul depot blast kills 60

Kabul: Up to 60 people were killed and scores injured in Kabul when a huge blast in a munitions depot at the Afghan presidential palace ripped through the war-torn city, officials said. (AFP)

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Prince weds Puerto Rican bellydancer

BY QUENTIN LETTS

ONE of pop music's oddest figures, the singer once known as Prince, has wed in quixotic manner. His wife is a Puerto Rican bellydancer, Mayte Garcia.

Prince no longer answers to that name, preferring to be known by an unutterable symbol. This presented difficulties for the exchange of vows, so when Miss Garcia wanted to indicate the identity of her husband-to-be (as in "I, Mayte Garcia, take thee... to be my lawful, wedded husband"), she pointed to a representation of Prince's symbol that she was wearing around her neck. The Rev Keith Johnson, officiating, made allowances as he is an old friend of the groom.

The wedding was planned for Paris, but owing to bureaucratic delays, was eventually held at a church in the Delaware home-

the couple announced their marriage on the Internet. As the 30-minute service proceeded, a page on the Internet gradually depicted a psychedelic image of the happy couple, surrounded by purple patches, symbols and manacles. "Welcome to the dawn," it announced, "coincidence or fate?" Prince's musical colleagues in the New Power Generation Orchestra composed a symphony, *Kama Sutra*, to celebrate the wedding on St Valentine's Day.

It was not disclosed if Miss Garcia, who is a dancer in Prince's band, will take her husband's non-name. The couple left the church under a canopy that covered the distance from the church door to the waiting limousine, frustrating photographers and numerous fans.

A reception was held at a recording studio in the Min-



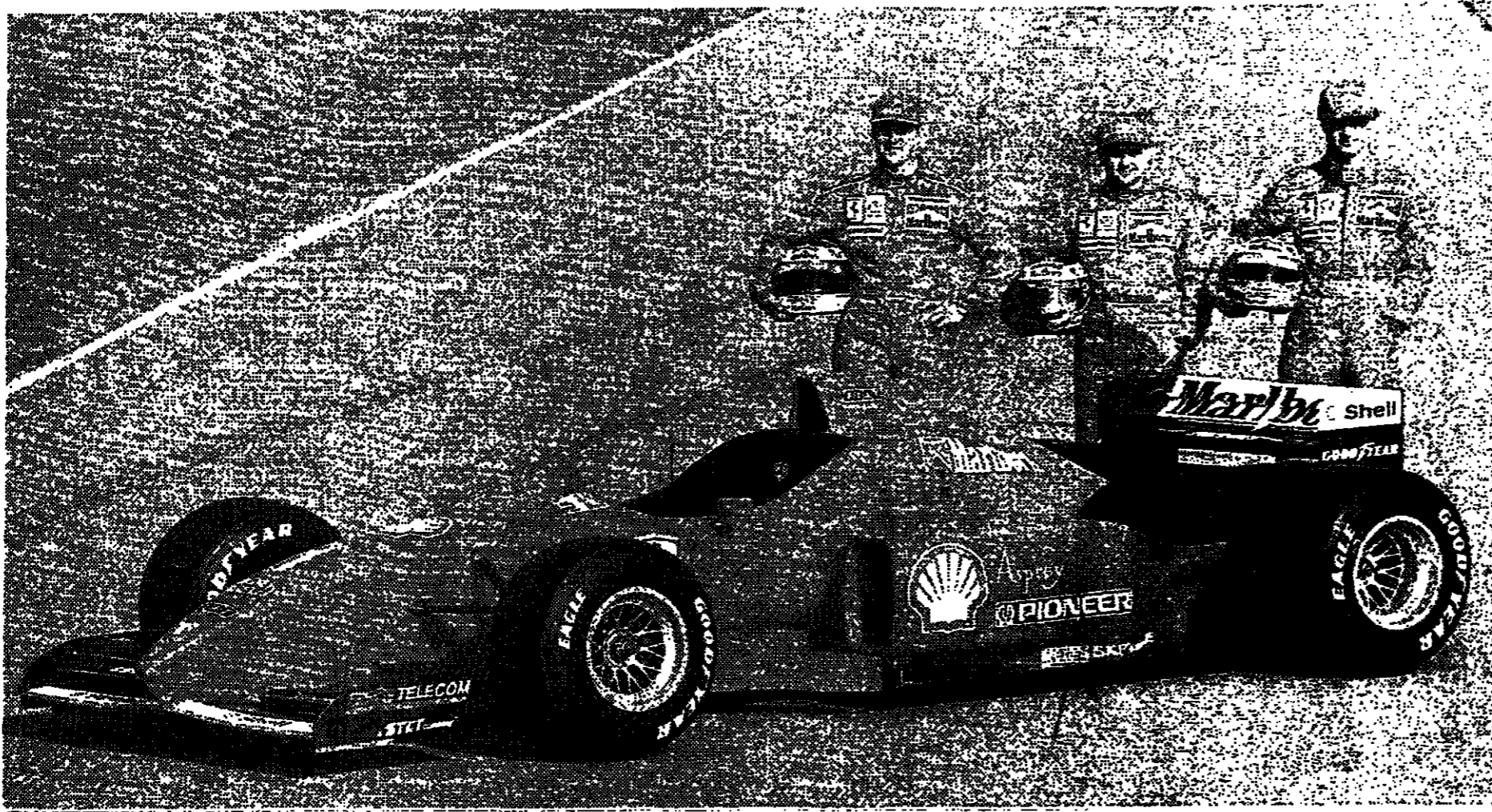
بكتو بالاس

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Sports Guardian

SCHUMACHER UNVEILS THE REVOLUTIONARY NEW FERRARI



Figures in a landscape... Schumacher (left) and team-mates Nicola Larini and Eddie Irvine (right) stand to attention as the new Ferrari parades its lines and logos

'We have the means to win the championship. Last year we had two good drivers in Alesi and Berger but this year we have something more: we have a star'

IN A time-honoured ceremony which during recent years has come to represent the ritual triumph of hope over experience, the Scuderia Ferrari yesterday presented their contender for the 1996 Formula One championship, a car so eagerly awaited that its unveiling unstaged even the presence of the team's new leader, the German double world champion Michael Schumacher. Local enthusiasts left their jobs to line the bridges and fences separating Ferrari's Fiorano test track from the main Abetone-to-Modena road as the new car, designated the F310, sat glittering in the spring-like Emilian sun. Its scarlet bodywork shrouding the first 10-cylinder engine ever produced at the Maranello factory, the car looked beautiful. But then in February they always do.

After a week of testing in Portugal the new car will make its debut at the Australian Grand Prix on March 10. This will be the 55th grand prix contested by the Scuderia Ferrari since the world championship began in 1950. Yet only eight of its record 105 victories have come in the present decade, no Ferrari driver has won the world title since Jody Scheckter in 1979 and last year's sole success was Jean Alesi's lucky strike in Canada.

Alesi and Gerhard Berger were the casualties when Ferrari and Philip Morris, their chief sponsor, agreed to pay Schumacher £33 million over two years to bring his unrivalled speed and discipline to bear on the team's motivation. But Schumacher, with his new team-mate Eddie Irvine by his side, yesterday maintained his shrewd policy of playing down the team's immediate ambitions.

ant president, Luca di Montezemolo, was persuaded that while judicious understatement may be fine for Germans, the Italian people require bold promises. Reports that Agnelli had issued an ultimatum to Montezemolo that Ferrari must win the championship with Schumacher or face the unthinkable possibility of a withdrawal from racing were denied by the man himself, who had arrived by helicopter to bestow his blessing upon the new car. "First, we never set deadlines," he said. "I've learned from Italian politics that a deadline is never really final."

And then the World Cup in Italy has taught him that while judicious understatement may be fine for Germans, the Italian people require bold promises. Reports that Agnelli had issued an ultimatum to Montezemolo that Ferrari must win the championship with Schumacher or face the unthinkable possibility of a withdrawal from racing were denied by the man himself, who had arrived by helicopter to bestow his blessing upon the new car. "First, we never set deadlines," he said. "I've learned from Italian politics that a deadline is never really final."

Richard Williams sees the new F310 launched at Fiorano as Ferrari's master exudes ten-cylinder optimism for 1996

ship in 1997. This season I think we have to concentrate on developing reliability. "Ferrari had 13 retirements last season and I don't think we can put that right in three months. I'm sure we'll be competitive but I don't know if we'll finish all the races."

seasons put together. Montezemolo, who managed one renaissance of the team during the Niki Lauda years in the mid-Seventies, was brought back to rescue Ferrari four years ago by Gianni Agnelli, the president of Fiat and his long-time patron. His subsequent experience of running first Juve-

tus and then the World Cup in Italy has taught him that while judicious understatement may be fine for Germans, the Italian people require bold promises. Reports that Agnelli had issued an ultimatum to Montezemolo that Ferrari must win the championship with Schumacher or face the unthinkable possibility of a withdrawal from racing were denied by the man himself, who had arrived by helicopter to bestow his blessing upon the new car. "First, we never set deadlines," he said. "I've learned from Italian politics that a deadline is never really final."

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Sky high demands from Bruno



Frank Keating

LORD HOWELL and his chums in Westminster's upper chamber who ganged up last week against Sky TV's exclusivity found some surprising support off the Atlantic coast of Africa yesterday when Bruno's two most celebrated champion boxers chipped in their own two penn'orth about Murdoch's satellite sports channel.

long time. When I was invited to 10 Downing Street by John Major to meet Bill Clinton, I hear this Mr. Chisholm is there, so I'm chasing around the rooms trying to get hold of him and I just can't get to meet the guy. Where is he? Who is he? Is he Prince Charles or something royal?"

Nigel Benn and Frank Bruno are both in Tenerife's sunshine preparing for their upcoming world championship defenses — Benn's against Thulane Malinga in Newcastle on March 2 and Bruno against Mike Tyson in Las Vegas a fortnight later. First, the always combative Benn refused to let Sky cameras film his training because, he said, "they have not shown me consistent enough respect in my years as champion". This seemed particularly quirky on Benn's part as Sky were looking to promote the fight their cameras are covering. But, if the mood takes you, I suppose an Englishman is allowed to cut off his nose to spite his face on the island.

NOW sport's most crudely totem might be turning nasty. "I'm grateful for my £1 million. That's the going rate. But if Sky are doing 'pay-per-view' it could put a different complexion on my gratefulness. But they won't tell me anything. If it is pay-per-view and they want me to participate, aren't I entitled to a little shout? But they just call me greedy. It's not greed, it's business. I have been trying to meet Mr Chisholm (Sam, Sky's chief executive) for a

turn to page 15, column 2

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Guardian Crossword No 20,577

Set by Mercury

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

Across

- Lay ill, all in (8)
- Frisk doctor in prison (6)
- Car in fog reversed onto barrier, for which driver's fined (8,7)
- Modest tea set needs replacing (6)
- Circling overhead keen to protect ringleader (8)
- Groan about mould on fabric (6)
- Show evil student leaving once nothing's missing (8)
- You finally fled with us to a planet (6)
- Fish tea noisily consumed by theatre worker (8)
- Meticulous accountant rejected by clergyman (8)
- Not a day to admit bad back is sagging (6)
- Which provides writers with useful points? (8,6)

Down

- Baffled cast (6)
- Marsh will be found if not in service (6)
- Comrade starts running into trouble (7)
- Seem so short of round faces (5)
- Flavouring I understand a joiner goes without (7)
- A couple of fellows, competent and friendly (7)
- Living on bread endlessly, object (9)
- Fancy Colin accepting an account that's brief? (7)
- Diaregard, in Scandinavian money, about £1,000 (6)
- One can run reviews for a BBC employee (8)
- The most prosperous being Eric he's taken inside (7)

Solution tomorrow

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